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Fried Chicken - A Preview of the World's Poultry Congress

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An interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, Washington, D. C., and Mr. Everett Mitchell, National Broadcasting Company, Chicago, Illinois' broadcast Thursday, July 27, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home program, by the National Broadcasting company and a network of 104 associate radio stations, from the Chicago Studio.

EVERETT MITCHELL:

Today we have Ruth Van Deman out here in Chicago with us. And what's more she tells me that in honor of the opening of the World's Poultry Congress in Cleveland tomorrow, she's all ready to stage a dress rehearsal on fried chicken, roast turkey, broiled duckling - - -

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

Just a second, Everett, -- I said if you'd furnish the properties.

MITCHELL:

Properties?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, the pots, the pans, the birds, the butter, the basting spoons - - -

MITCHELL:

Oh, I thought your travelling kitchen was probably "just around the corner."

VAN DEMAN:

Sorry, I'm afraid it got stuck--somewhere back in Indiana. I guess we'll just have to imagine we're looking into one of the transparent kitchens they're going to have in Cleveland.

MITCHELL:

Transparent kitchens?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, glass around the outside and stoves in the center, with all kinds of birds cooking--broiling--frying--stewing--steaming.

MITCHELL:

Well, a bird on the stove's worth two in the show ring.

VAN DEMAN:

Maybe if we demonstrate that we know how to cook chicken---maybe they might give us a job over there.

MITCHELL:

That would be something. I'll dig out my chef's outfit - - -

VAN DEMAN:

Your stiffest, starchiest, tallest, whitest chef's cap and your best apron - -

(over)

MITCHELL:

And waxed moustaches turned up at the ends---so.

VAN DEMAN:

Oui, monsieur. In case you need some recipes, here's the Bureau of Home Economics' new folder on how to cook poultry.

MITCHELL:

Say, now this is something---"Poultry Cooking." Did you say this is new?

VAN DEMAN:

Very, very new. This copy left Washington after I did--flew out here by air mail for this broadcast.

MITCHELL:

I appreciate that very much. And are some flying to Cleveland for the World's Poultry Congress too?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, if you go to the Government exhibit in Cleveland, Lucy Alexander will give you a copy. We felt quite sure people would be wanting recipes on how to cook poultry the modern way.

MITCHELL:

I'd say you've covered everything---broiling---frying---roasting---stuffing---braising---stewing---steaming.---It's all here.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, the general methods of cooking young birds and old birds are there. And we've tried to honor the chicken, and the duck, and the goose, and the guinea ---

MITCHELL:

And his highness, the turkey, here on the cover, with the steam rising all around.---And I congratulate you too on this nice job of printing---very swanky---the latest thing in blue and white.

VAN DEMAN:

The thanks for that go to the Government Printing Office. Well now, how shall we fry the chicken---shallow fat or deep fat?

MITCHELL:

Which makes it brown and tender?

VAN DEMAN:

Either one, if you keep the temperature right.

MITCHELL:

What about cream chicken gravy with all those nice little brown flecks in it ---which way do you get that?

VAN DEMAN:

I see, Everett. You like your chicken fried the old-fashioned way, under a lid, in a heavy skillet. So do I.

MITCHELL:

And do you agree that it's all right to eat fried chicken with the fingers?

VAN DEMAN:

Oh my, yes. Fingers or forks, it all depends on where you are.

MITCHELL:

Then there's no protocol in Washington against picking up a drumstick---- like this?

VAN DEMAN:

No, not even in the highest circles.

MITCHELL:

Well, I'm glad to know I can eat chicken in the rough and stay on the social register.

VAN DEMAN:

Shall we go on with the frying then?

MITCHELL:

By all means, and tell me what is the science of getting chicken fried to that wonderful done-to-the-bone tenderness---that state of perfection that makes it fairly melt in the mouth?

VAN DEMAN:

Well, of course you have to have good plump chickens to start with ---

MITCHELL:

Yes, I know, kept in a coop for a while and fattened on grain---or milk fed.

VAN DEMAN:

Then, there's one rule that holds in all kinds of poultry---keep the cooking temperature moderate.

MITCHELL:

Yes, I know that rule. That's because chicken is meat. And meat is protein. And if you turn on too much heat when you cook protein, you shrivel it up and make it dry and hard.

VAN DEMAN:

Why, Everett Mitchell, I do believe you've been listening to the Farm and Home Hour.

MITCHELL:

I think maybe I have. There's a lady who broadcasts every Thursday from Washington. And her name is - - -

VAN DEMAN:

Bureau of Home Economics. Well, she's glad to know she has one listener in Chicago.

So when we put this chicken on to fry, we'll have the fat hot but not smoking.

MITCHELL:

But it has to be hot enough to make the chicken sizzle.

VAN DEMAN:

And brown yes. But it shouldn't be hot enough to smoke and burn. That isn't so good for the fat, and it certainly isn't good for the chicken. And we'll put the thickest pieces of the chicken in first.

MITCHELL:

The drumsticks, and the second joints - - -

VAN DEMAN:

And the thickest pieces of white meat.

MITCHELL:

We can leave the wings to the last then.

VAN DEMAN:

But we mustn't crowd the skillet. Chicken needs elbow room as it fries. Space for the fat to come up well around it so it can cook evenly. And plenty of fat.

MITCHELL:

When do we turn it?

VAN DEMAN:

Just as soon as it browns. And then put the lid back on and turn the heat way down.

Or if you have the oven hot lets take each piece out as soon as it's brown, and put it in a covered pan in the oven to finish.

Slip a rack underneath the chicken though, so that the fat will drain to the bottom and not soak in.

MITCHELL:

And where do we make the gravy?

VAN DEMAN:

In the pan where we fried the chicken. That's where all those nice little brown flecks are---those bits of browned flour that fell off the chicken as it fried.

Now what do you say we get a big platter and pass some of this fried chicken to Walter Blaufuss and the Homesteader?

MITCHELL:

Ruth Van Deman, you'll be mobbed.

VAN DEMAN:

Oh, I thought they were used to rehearsals.

MITCHELL:

Not rehearsals on fried chicken with no fried chicken in sight. And besides there was a picture of Wallace Kanderly, and Mike Rowell, and those fellows down there in Washington one time carving a roast turkey right by the microphone.

VAN DEMAN:

Well, here's a promise. If the Chicago branch of the Farm and Home family will really journey eastward some day, we'll have a fried chicken picnic in Potomac Park.

MITCHELL:

That will be chicken in the rough.

VAN DEMAN:

You can use the Tidal Basin for a finger bowl.

MITCHELL: (To the Homesteaders)

What do you say, shall we accept?

HOMESTEADERS:

Ad lib

VAN DEMAN:

And, Everett Mitchell, we'll set up a field kitchen for you, and appoint you Chief Fried Chicken Cook. Don't forget you chef's apron.

MITCHELL:

I'll start growing the waxed mustachios right now.

Well, Farm and Home friends, we're indebted to the World's Poultry Congress opening in Cleveland tomorrow for bringing Ruth Van Deman Chicago's way.

And about that new folder on "Poultry Cooking." I'm sure that anybody who doesn't have a chance to visit the Government exhibit in Cleveland can have a copy of this 8-page folder on cooking poultry the modern way by writing to the Bureau of Home Economics in Washington, D. C.

